First large scale LGBT+ project to be funded in



A new project, which will tell the story of people's experiences of the decriminalisation of homosexuality in Northern Ireland, will be the first of its kind.

Homosexuality was not decriminalised in Northern Ireland until 1982, 15 years after legislation was passed in England.

The judgement by the European Court of Human Rights was the first of its kind to be decided in favour of LGBT+ rights. But for the LGBT+ community in Northern Ireland, the next impactful legislative change didn’t occur until 1998 with the introduction of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act.

> “This is our story and it can’t wait any longer to be told."
>
> - Cara McCann, Director of HERe NI

Now a new project will capture and record the memories and experiences of the LGBT+ community throughout this 16-year period, with the help of a £70,000 grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

The Troubles I've Seen

Led by HERe NI working in partnership with The Rainbow Project and Cara-Friend, the two-year The Troubles I've Seen project will explore this hidden heritage, recording the untold stories of the people who lived during this period for the first time.

Director of HERe NI, Cara McCann, said: "Our plan to record the heritage of the local LGBT community is the first meaningful funded project of its kind in Northern Ireland.

"Many younger people are shocked to learn that laws that criminalised same-sex relationships existed until the 1980s. The impact of decriminalisation and the experiences of LGBT people have never before been explored or documented in any large-scale way."

Sharing heritage with new audiences

The funding will be used to recruit volunteers and provide training in a range of heritage and media skills. The volunteers will collate the important artefacts, documents and historical materials held by the partner organisations which are currently in storage. They will create a digital archive to safeguard this heritage and increase people's access to it.

They will also be involved in:

- recording interviews
- producing a documentary film
- creating a touring exhibitio
- giving talks across Northern Ireland to share this heritage with new audiences

For Cara, sharing her community's heritage is an important element of the project.

"Our young community members have no frame of reference for understanding their past; our older members have been unable to tell their stories and we are invisible in the history books.

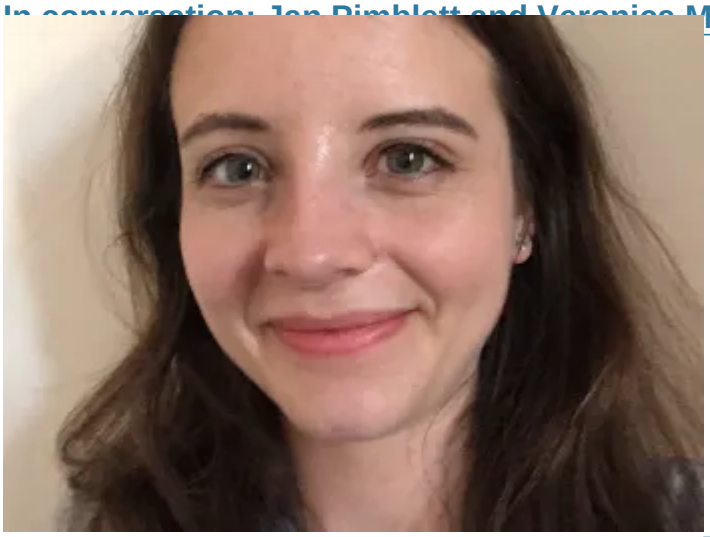
"This is our story and it can't wait any longer to be told. We've already lost some of this heritage as people have passed on so there is a real sense of urgency to conserve as much as we can."

Director of The National Lottery Heritage Fund in Northern Ireland, Paul Mullan, added: "Without this project the heritage of the local LGBT+ community is in real danger of being lost, so we are delighted to help give a voice to the people who lived through this period of change and enable them to record their history for the first time."

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In conversation: Jen Pimblett and Veronica McKenzie on archives and collecting stories of



Young people celebrate important figures of Wales' LGBT+ history